

The Quality of Life



2004

The region achieved continuing improvement in reducing violent crime rates. However, there continued to be little improvement in student performance.

Quality of Life

Education

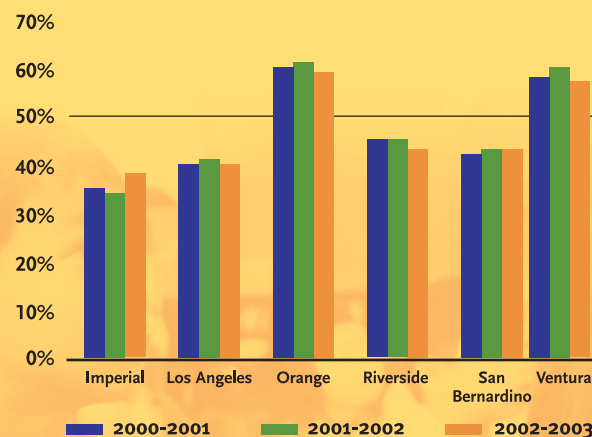
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Student performance is measured through three indicators: 1) test scores for eighth grade, 2) high school dropout rates, and 3) percent of high school graduates completing courses required for the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) entrance. High school dropouts are severely disadvantaged in competing for quality jobs. Performance on the last indicator reflects the potential level of success in pursuing college education by high school graduates.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2003, the 8th graders (graduating class of middle schools) in the region continued to perform below the national median in reading and math test scores except in Orange and Ventura counties (Figures 60 and 61). Between 2002 and 2003, there were noticeable declines in reading scores throughout the region relative to the nation. There were no major changes in math scores.

Figure 60
Math Test Scores for 8th Grade
(Percent above National Median Score)*

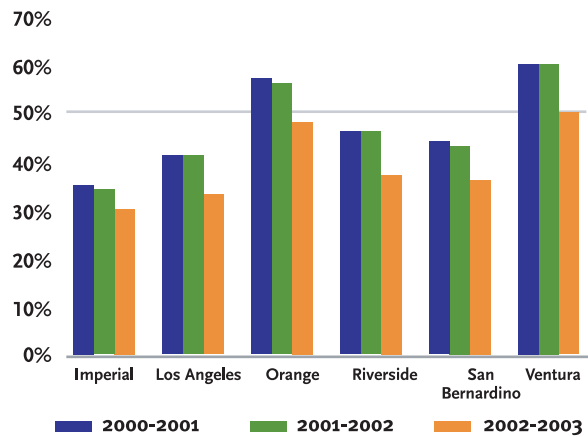


* Performed better than the nation if more than 50% students were above the national median score.

Source: California Department of Education



Figure 61
Reading Test Scores for 8th Grade
(Percent above National Median Score)*



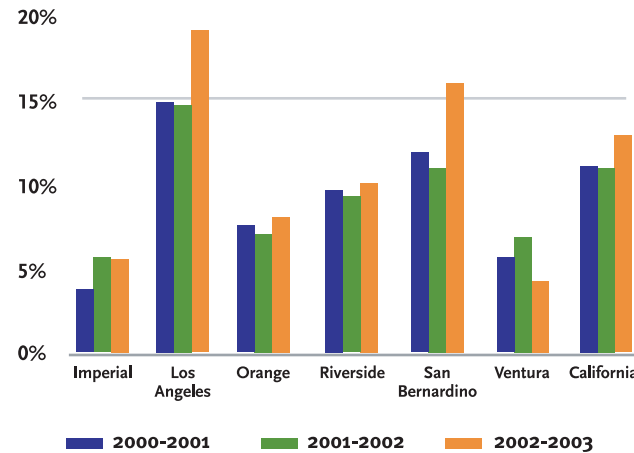
* Performed better than the nation if more than 50% students were above the national median score.

Source: California Department of Education

Between 2002 and 2003, dropout rates for high schools increased significantly in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. The dropout rate also increased at the state level to a lesser extent. It should be noted that in the 2002-2003 school year, the California Department of Education started using the National Center for Education Statistics dropout rate criteria. Within the region, only Ventura County experienced a noticeable reduction. (Figure 62).

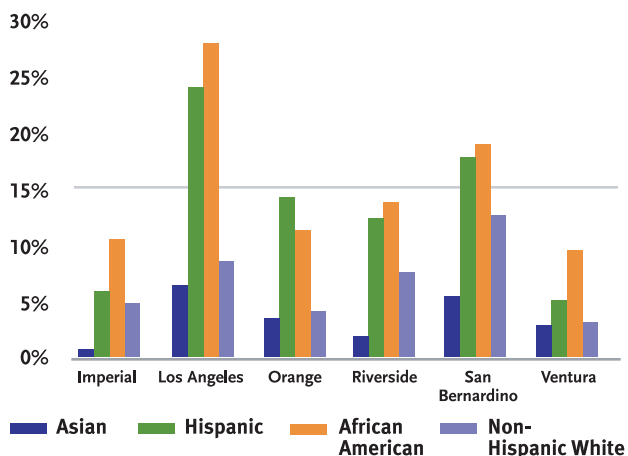
African American and Hispanic high school students in the region, when compared with their White and Asian peers, had significantly higher dropout rates (Figure 63). For example, the dropout rate for African American students in Los Angeles County reached almost 28 percent in 2003 compared with 6 percent for Asian students. African American high school students had the highest dropout rate throughout the region except Orange County. This is contrary to the national trend in which Hispanic students had the highest dropout rate. Asian students generally had the lowest dropout rates. The disparity is much more pronounced in Los Angeles County than in the other counties.

Figure 62
Dropout Rates in Public High Schools



Source: California Department of Education

Figure 63
Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity in
Public High Schools, 2002-2003

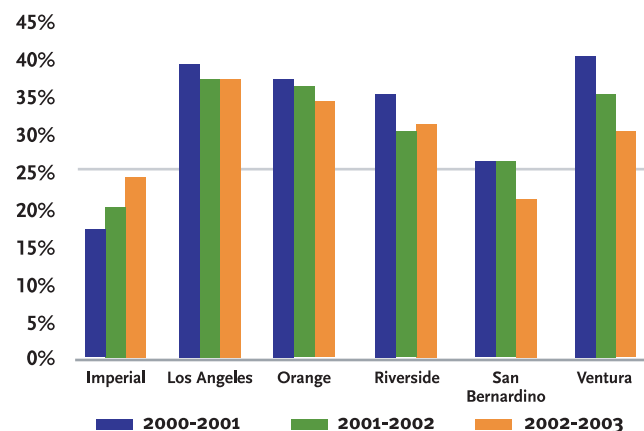


Source: California Department of Education

As to the percentage of high school graduates completing courses required for University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) entrance, while Imperial County made noticeable progress, both Ventura and San Bernardino counties experienced lower performance in 2003. *In 2003, every county in the region had less than 40 percent of high school graduates complete courses required for UC or CSU entrance* (Figure 64).

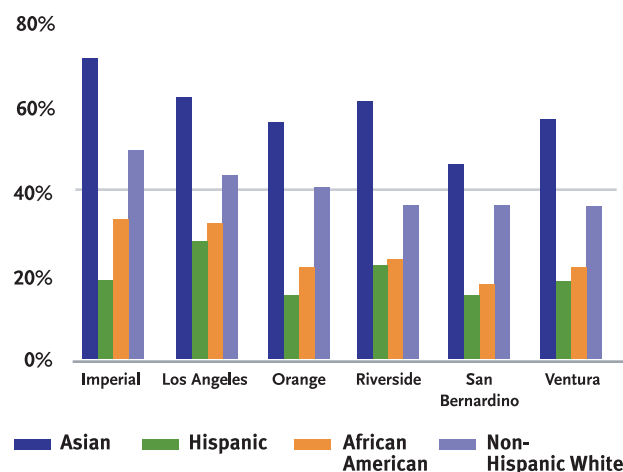
There were also similar patterns of racial and ethnic disparities across the six counties in the region (Figure 65). For example, while more than 60 percent of Asian graduates in Riverside County completed courses required for UC or CSU entrance, only 22 percent of the Hispanic students achieved the same.

Figure 64
High School Graduates Completing Courses
Required for UC or CSU Entrance



Source: California Department of Education

Figure 65
High School Graduates Completing Courses
Required for UC or CSU Entrance by Race/Ethnicity
(2002-2003)



Source: California Department of Education

The SCAG region lost ground in educational attainment during the 1990s. Among the nine largest metropolitan regions in the nation, Southern California was the only one that did not make any progress in educational attainment, specifically with respect to the proportion of population 25 years and over who earned at least a high school diploma.¹

In 2003, there were slight improvements regarding educational attainment in the region following the trend at the national level. Among the nine largest metropolitan regions, the SCAG region remained in last place in the percentage of adults (76 percent) with at least a high school diploma, and 2nd to last for at least a Bachelor's degree (27 percent).²

Public Safety

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Crime-related activities consume an enormous amount of valuable social and economic resources. The social costs are real, though less quantifiable, including pain and suffering of crime victims and their families and weakening of community cohesion. The economic costs include loss of productivity due to death or disability resulting from crime, medical costs, and loss of property values in neighborhoods with high crime rates.



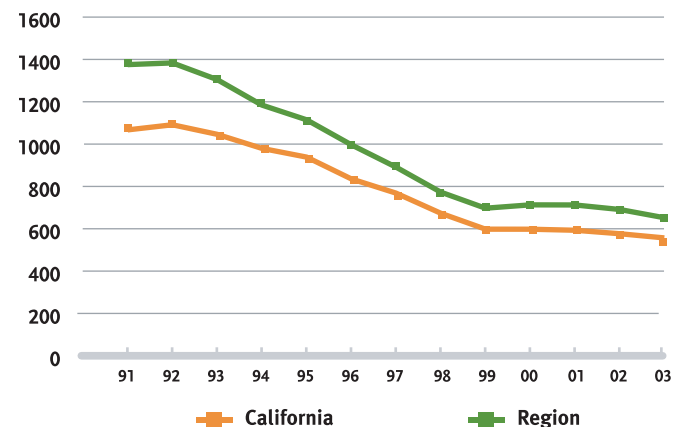
HOW ARE WE DOING?

VIOLENT CRIMES

In 2003, the violent crime rate in the region declined by almost 6 percent from 2002, larger than the 3 percent reduction during the previous period. At the state level, violent crime rate declined by about 3 percent between 2002 and 2003. However, the region continued to have a higher violent crime rate than the state as a whole (Figure 66). Violent crime rates in both the region and the state peaked in 1992 and have been declining since then, except for a slight increase in 2000.

Violent crimes include four types: homicides, forcible rapes, robberies and aggressive assaults. In 2003, among the 114,962 violent crime incidents, 71,540 (or 62 percent) were aggravated assaults, 37,727 (33 percent) were robberies, 4,267 were forcible rapes (3.7 percent) and 1,428 (1.3 percent) were homicides. *From 2002 to 2003, both the total numbers as well as crime rates declined across all four types of violent crimes.*

Figure 66
Violent Crimes
(Per 100,000 Population)

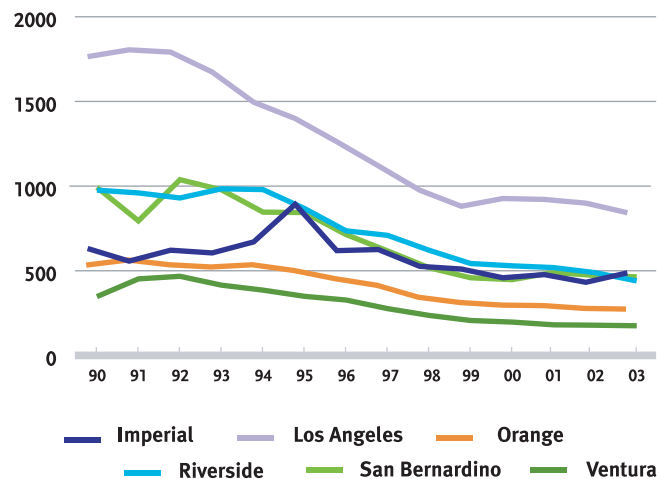


Source: California Department of Justice

Within the region, reduction of the violent crime rate in 2003 was most significant in Riverside County (-8.6 percent) and Los Angeles County (-6.3 percent). Imperial County was the only county in the region experiencing higher violent crime rate in 2003, mainly due to the increase of aggravated assaults. About three-quarters of the violent crimes took place in Los Angeles County. Orange and Ventura counties consistently had the lowest rates in violent crimes in the region (Figure 67).

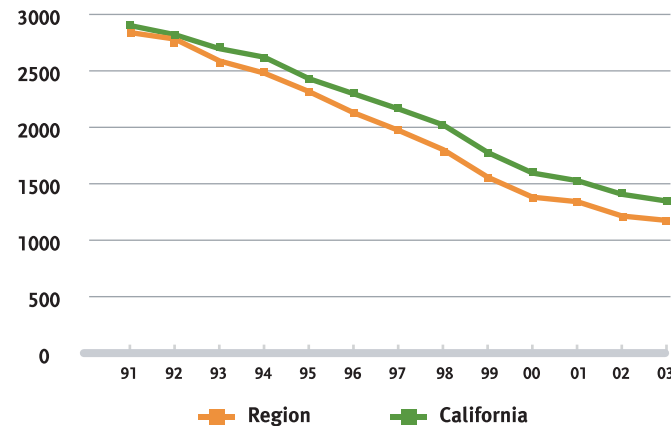
Between 2002 and 2003, the total number of homicides in the region decreased from 1,515 to 1,428. This mainly resulted from improvements in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Nevertheless, in 2003, Los Angeles County still accounted for almost three-quarters of the total homicides in the region.

Figure 67
Violent Crimes by County
(Per 100,000 Population)



Source: California Department of Justice

Figure 68
Juvenile Felony Arrests
(Per 100,000 Population Aged 10-17)

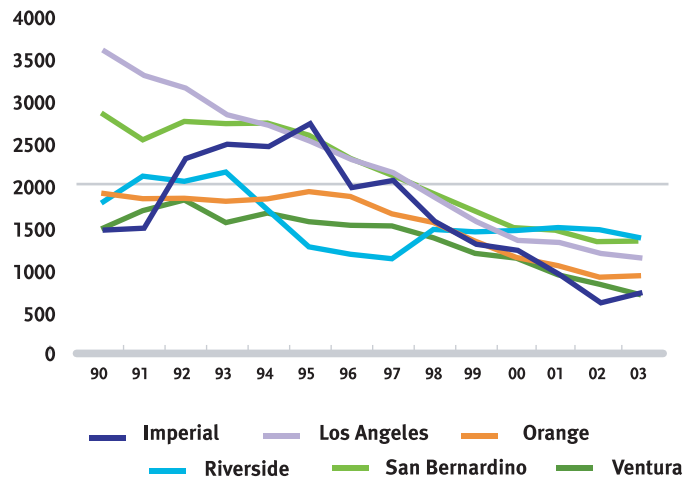


Source: California Department of Justice

JUVENILE FELONY ARRESTS

A felony offense is defined as a crime that is punishable by death or imprisonment. Juvenile felony arrest rates for those aged 10 to 17 have continuously declined in the region since 1990. From 2002 to 2003, there were reductions of about 3 percent in juvenile arrest rate in the region, comparable to the 4 percent decrease at the state level (Figure 68). Improvement was most significant in Ventura County with a 14 percent reduction between 2002 and 2003 after an 11 percent decrease in the previous period. Both Riverside and San Bernardino counties had much higher juvenile felony arrest rates than Los Angeles in 2003, reversing circumstances of a decade ago in which they had much lower rates than Los Angeles County (Figure 69).

Figure 69
Juvenile Felony Arrests by County
 (Per 100,000 Population Aged 10-17)



Source: California Department of Justice

In 2002, the region had about 26,700 juvenile felony arrests. Among them, about 5,700 arrests (or 21 percent) were due to burglary, close to 5,000 arrests (19 percent) due to theft (including motor vehicles) and another 4,600 arrests (or 17 percent) due to assault. In addition, more than 2,700 arrests (or 10 percent) were for drug law violation. More than three quarters of the total juvenile arrests were males.

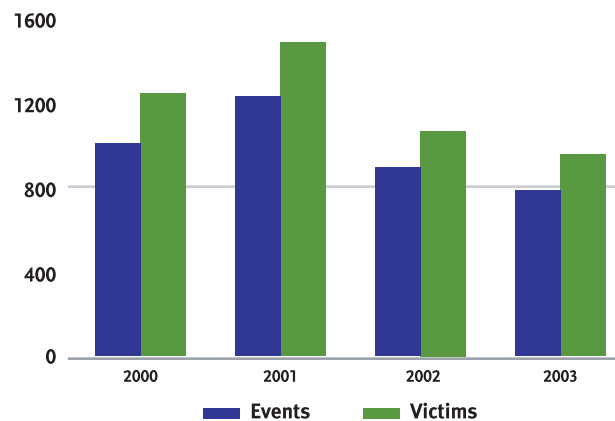
In Orange and Ventura counties, juvenile felony arrests for burglary accounted for 26 percent of their total arrests, significantly higher than the regional average of 21 percent. On the other hand, juvenile felony arrests for violent offenses (including homicide, forcible rape, robbery and assault) in these two counties accounted for only 20 percent of their total arrests, significantly lower than the regional average of 27 percent.

HATE CRIMES

The number of hate crime events and victims in the region declined by about 12 percent between 2002 and 2003, following an almost 30 percent reduction during the previous period. Hate crimes could be in the form of violent crimes (70 percent) or property crimes (30 percent).³ As to the motivations for hate crimes in 2003, statewide data indicated that more than 60 percent of the events were due to race/ethnicity bias followed by about 23 percent for sexual orientation bias and 15 percent for religious bias. Close to 60 percent of the hate crimes events took place on the highways/streets or around residence/home.

The year 2001 was the peak year in hate crimes in the last five years due primarily to the September 11 terrorist attacks (Figure 70). For four consecutive years, more than 70 percent of the hate crime events and victims were in Los Angeles County.

Figure 70
Hate Crime Activities



Source: California Department of Justice